

Barriers to Interpersonal Communication

Intensional Orientation

- What is Intensional Orientation?
 - Intensional Orientation refers to the tendency to view people, objects, and events in terms of how they are talked about or labeled rather than in terms of how they actually exist (Devito 155).
 - In other words, this is when you act as if the words and labels are more important than the things they are representing.
 - For example, seeing a professor as a staunch authority figure and reacting negatively to her before getting to know her.
 - Or, seeing a person with a disability only through that label, instead of seeing them as an actual person.
- Why should I avoid Intensional Orientation?
 - Intensional Orientation leads to the adoption of improper, misleading, and offensive labels and stereotypes for people or groups of people.
- How do I correct Intensional Orientation?
 - The best corrective is to *ask* what a person would like to be called and to *listen and apologize* when you are told that a certain label or phrase is offensive.
 - Focus first on the object, person, or event and *then* on the way the object, person, or event is talked about (Devito 155).
 - Labels are certainly helpful, but we don't want them to obscure what they're meant to symbolize (Devito 155).